

# **Sleeping Bear Dunes General Management Plan Newsletter 1**

## **Seeking Input for the Future of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore**

Dear Friends,

For many of us, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is a very special place. Its diverse landscape of quiet, birch-lined streams; dense, beech-maple forests; plentiful, clear lakes; extensive shoreline; and massive glacial headlands draws hundreds of thousands of visitors each year for adventure and relaxation.

It has been 20 years since the development of the first general management plan for Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. To ensure that Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore can continue to protect its special resources and provide meaningful visitor experiences into the future, the National Park Service is embarking on the development of a new general management plan. This new plan will provide a 20-year framework for making management decisions about protecting lakeshore resources while providing for use by visitors. During the course of this two-year planning process, we will be asking a number of fundamental questions: What should we be doing to ensure that visitors continue to have a quality experience while visiting the lakeshore? What levels and types of use are appropriate for the lakeshore? How should we manage the lakeshore's natural and cultural resources?

We invite you to help us find answers to these questions and determine the future of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Your views are important to us. At various points in this two-year planning process, we will be asking for participation and input from the general public (both locally and nationally), the state of Michigan, other federal agencies, and special interest groups. This is your opportunity to become involved, be heard, and make a difference.

We appreciate your interest in the lakeshore and look forward to working with you throughout this planning effort. Please join us for the first public meeting about the general management plan on Friday, December 17, 1999, at 9:30 a.m. in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Visitor Center Auditorium, 9922 Front Street, Empire, MI 49630. Updated general management plan information will be placed on the lakeshore's website, <http://www.nps.gov/slbe>, throughout the planning process. If you have any questions or comments at any time during the planning process, please write us at Superintendent, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, 9922 Front Street, Empire, Michigan 49630; call us at 231-326-5134; or email us at [slbe\\_gmp@nps.gov](mailto:slbe_gmp@nps.gov).

Sincerely,

Ivan D. Miller  
Superintendent

## **General Management Plan**

A general management plan (GMP) provides a vision for the future of a park unit and a practical framework for decision-making about how to provide for quality visitor experiences, manage visitation, and best protect park resources. It involves identifying goals based on the legislative intent of the lakeshore, analyzing existing conditions and future possibilities, and then determining the best course of action to accomplish those goals. The plan will not include specific facility designs, resolve all issues, nor guarantee funding in the future. Rather, it will describe the general path the National Park Service (NPS) intends to follow in managing the lakeshore for the next 20 years.

The General Management Plan will:

- Provide general direction and basic management philosophy
- Identify management and use strategies
- Identify facility needs, functions, and general locations
- Define National Park Service roles and responsibilities
- Satisfy statutory and National Park Service policy requirements
- Identify costs and staffing needs

The General Management Plan will not:

- Develop detailed design plans for specific areas
- Guarantee funding
- Be a state or local plan
- Be legally binding
- Resolve all lakeshore issues

With input from the public, the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore GMP will be prepared by a team consisting of the lakeshore superintendent, lakeshore staff, staff from the National Park Service's Midwest Regional Office, and technical specialists from the National Park Service's planning and design office in Denver, Colorado.

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## **The Planning Process**

The planning team will follow a logical, systematic process in preparing the plan. The four key steps in the planning process include:

- 1) Collect data and identify issues
- 2) Develop and evaluate alternatives
- 3) Prepare and publish a draft plan / environmental impact statement
- 4) Revise and publish the final plan

The public will be asked for their input during each of the four steps. Details on each step can be found in the chart below.

## Planning Activity

### **Step 1: Collect Data and Identify Issues, Winter 1999 - Spring 2000.**

The team reaffirms the purpose of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (based on the park's enabling legislation), gathers and analyzes information necessary for the GMP, identifies the lakeshore's significant resources, and with the help of public input determines issues and concerns.

### **Step 2: Develop and Evaluate Alternatives, Summer - Winter 2000.**

Since typically there are many ideas and visions for the management of an area, a range of alternative ways to achieve goals and solve problems will be developed. These ideas and visions are developed into "alternatives". Included in this process is consideration of the environmental consequences of these different visions or alternatives. This will be the beginning of the environmental impact statement (EIS).

### **Step 3: Prepare and Publish Draft Plan/EIS, Spring - Summer 2001.**

A draft GMP / EIS will be prepared and distributed for public comment. These draft plans will describe a range of alternatives, provide a list of issues and concerns, outline the environmental consequences of each alternative, and help identify a preferred alternative.

### **Step 4: Revise and Publish Plan, Fall 2001 - Winter 2001.**

A final plan will be developed based on the environmental analysis, public comment, and other information. It may be one of the alternatives from the draft plan, or it could be a "new" alternative created by combining elements from some or all of the draft alternatives.

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## Issues and Concerns

The planning team has compiled an initial list of issues or areas of concern. This list is a starting point for the public to add to and comment on. Throughout the planning process the issues and concerns will be refined through public involvement and will form the cornerstone for the plan. The team's initial list has been categorized into seven major areas:

**Conservation and Preservation of Natural Resources:** Natural resources are continually being impacted or threatened by developments and uses from inside and outside the lakeshore. How will the lakeshore protect these resources while accommodating an appropriate range of visitor uses? For the protection of some of these resources should boundary adjustments be pursued or cooperative endeavors explored?

**Historic Preservation:** Over the past two years the lakeshore has been planning for the preservation of its historic structures and cultural landscapes through the development of a Historic Properties Management Plan (final plan will be completed in spring 2000). How will the recommendations of the Historic Properties Management Plan be integrated into the GMP?

**Land Acquisition:** Each year presents an opportunity for the purchase of inholdings as owners offer their property as willing sellers, however land acquisition funds have not kept up with the

value of lands offered for sale. What land acquisition alternatives or sources of support can be identified to best secure inholdings for the benefit of lakeshore resources and future generations of lakeshore visitors?

**Lakeshore Development:** What development, if any, would be appropriate in the next 20 years and how can it be accommodated with the least impact to lakeshore resources and values?

**Lakeshore Operations and Management:** To most effectively and efficiently operate and manage the lakeshore what changes might be necessary (especially given limited financial resources)?

**Lakeshore Uses:** The lakeshore recorded nearly 1.3 million visitors in 1998, with most coming in the summer months. How can the NPS provide for an appropriate range of visitor experiences and opportunities while still protecting lakeshore resources and values?

**Wilderness:** As per the 1981 Wilderness Recommendation the lakeshore currently manages five areas as wilderness. Should, or can, the boundaries of these areas be modified? How can the NPS best manage these areas until they become officially designated as wilderness?

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## **Upcoming Public Meeting**

Your input and involvement in the general management plan process is important to the future of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Throughout the planning effort your involvement will be sought through a series of newsletters and public meetings. To provide an opportunity for your early involvement in the process a public meeting has been scheduled. This initial meeting will provide you an opportunity to find out more about the GMP process, share your issues and concerns, discuss the contents of this newsletter, and talk to members of the planning team. Please join us:

**Friday, December 17, 1999 at 9:30 a.m.**  
**Visitor Center Auditorium**  
**Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore**  
**9922 Front Street**  
**Empire, MI 49630**